

# 5000

# West



A Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center publication, 5000 West National Avenue, Milwaukee, WI

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## “Good Morning! Would you like a Journal Sentinel?”

This phrase will greet patients each morning with their breakfast tray beginning tomorrow (October 26). Papers will be distributed every day by members of the nutrition food service tray delivery team to those patients who answer “yes.”

The complimentary copy of the *Journal Sentinel* “is another way to strengthen our commitment of providing our patients with another ‘nice touch’ to start their day,” said Jean Wroblewski, RD, program manager, nutrition food service.

Sponsorship of this service is available by contacting the community relations office at 414 382-5363.



photo by Alex Suklys

**Mark Swayzer** will not only greet patients with his “Good Morning” smile, but will offer a *Journal Sentinel* to those receiving a breakfast tray. A limited number of papers will be available in the first floor lobbies for outpatients on weekdays.



## Grab your broomstick!

The infamous Halloween-a-thon is this Wednesday (October 27) in the Matousek Auditorium. Veteran Halloween-a-thoners will note the change in the day of the week. This year it promises to be about the same as in the past – frightful!

All Medical Center employees are invited to participate.

FrightFest costume judging begins at 2:45 p.m. and concludes at 3:15 p.m. Employees are invited to wear their weirdest costume with the caveat of appropriateness to the hospital setting and supervisory approval.

Following FrightFest is the Great Pumpkin Carve-Off beginning at 3:47 p.m. This

brehtaking demonstration of the skilled pits team against team in a timed slice-o-rama. Lacerations by the contestants is a demotion.

The physical therapists are well known for their carving skill and are expected to come back strong once again. Teams are to register by today (October 25) – call extension 41803. Unregistered teams will not be guaranteed space or pumpkins.

Judging will be by certified experts and the prizes awarded are too numerous to mention. “You gotta be there.” All are invited to watch... if you can handle it.



**Going for 100%.**  
The CFC is well on the way with almost 50% of the \$113,624 goal. The campaign runs until November 5. For more information, contact Aisha Mansour at ext. 42029.



charming...

*John W. Zewiske*

**5000 West** is published for all mayors, and this edition is published especially for our retiring mayor, **Ronald W. Wilging**. Ron, of course, is the undisputed Mayor of the Basement. Why would anyone want to dispute it? Now the mayor also has another government job – the one he is paid to do – the chief of storage and distribution.

Ron says that his career at the Medical Center has been in the basement since coming to work as a temporary excess clerk in January of 1986. His small and cluttered office is located conveniently adjacent to the basement warehouse.

Ron retired from the Army a few weeks before he began work here. He really didn't want to retire, but his diabetes forced the decision.

Ron entered the military following graduation from Washington High School in 1968. He saw combat in Vietnam with the 25th Infantry Division and served two tours. He is a decorated war veteran earning the Bronze Star with Valor, a Purple Heart and the Campaign Service Medal with three bronze battle stars.

He was shielding his friend Sgt. Morris who was hit by enemy fire and eventually lost his leg. Ron was hit in the left foot shattering his ankle. Sgt. Morris was evacuated by "Dustoff," and then Ron smiled, saying he was taken out "by forklift." He remembers the ride well. Later he woke with the doctor saying, "Boy are you lucky. You can go back." Ron didn't necessarily consider that lucky.

Ron doesn't talk much about his heroism (he would never use that word), but then knowing Ron, you also know he was just doing what had to be done.

Ron stayed with the Army, and over 18 years, he gained supply training and experience. He retired a first sergeant as a logistical advisor to the 84th Division here in Milwaukee.

Under Ron's signature quick-witted humor, he has a philosophical side. His wisdom is simple but insightful. And it is not just a speech – he practices it. Ron attributes his work ethic to his dad who was a labor foreman. That translates into Ron's mind-set – "When you care about what you do, it is very easy to do what's right."

Ron's life has taken a positive turn over the past few years and will take another come November 12, his last day of work. He is not counting the days. He is savoring them. He loves what he does.

He has seen many changes. In the past, his staff of 21 became 8. He has embraced computerization.

In his personal life, he has mellowed. He is no longer pushing the envelope. His health habits have changed. Part of that conversion he attributes to his doctor's warnings; the other to his wife, Marie Michalets, a supervisor in medical transcription.

Marie and Ron were married in 1996 in a little church in Rome, Italy. He explained that the Vatican was

booked. It was the ultimate challenge for this supply officer. "I persisted. It was a mountain of paper work. They charge you a million dollars." That included the "rent-a-witness." Marie and Ron do not speak Italian, which made it romantic plus interesting. "It was very nice," Ron admits, and since he rose to the challenge, he says with laughter in his voice, "It has been downhill ever since."

In retirement, Ron and Marie will move to their new home in Hot Springs Village,

Arkansas. They will not forget their roots as they plan to summer in Northern Wisconsin.

His health has not been the best. The diabetes and the vascular disease have slowed him down and was in part a contributor to the retirement equation at his age of 54.

To me Ron Wilging has always been my Sgt. Zales. You remember, Sgt. Zales the supply sergeant in MASH. He would always come through, even at the very last moment. Ron has never let me down, even though many times I had no fingernails left. He describes his job "as one of the good positions to help people out." He has done just that.

On Friday, the Mayor will be in the Matousek Auditorium as his constituents and friends bid their farewells. You will hear his hearty laugh as he greets his guests and gives them a handshake and an embrace. The people he loves will be next to him. It will not be an easy day for Ron. He is excited about the change, but it is not without anxiety. He has been vested in this Medical Center and its people since day one. Ron's decision to retire was difficult. "The time is right."

When he gets into his car on that last day – after turning in his keys and whatever – and pulls out of the parking lot, Ron will see in his rearview mirror his Medical Center getting smaller and smaller as he heads for his future. There will be a tear in his eye.

There will be one in mine too.

Godspeed.

— john w. zewiske



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The community relations office publishes *5000 West* bi-weekly as a channel of communication for employees, volunteers, patients and friends. *5000 West* is committed to enhancing the image of the Medical Center and its employees and volunteers through information, recognition and entertainment.

Articles of interest are welcome. The editor reserves the right to use and edit contributed stories. Submission deadline is two days prior to publication. Your comments are encouraged and should be directed to editor (00Z) 5000 West, VA Medical Center, Milwaukee, WI 53295: telephone (414) 382-5363 or (888) 469-6614, extension 45363 or e-mail [john.zewiske@med.va.gov](mailto:john.zewiske@med.va.gov)

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